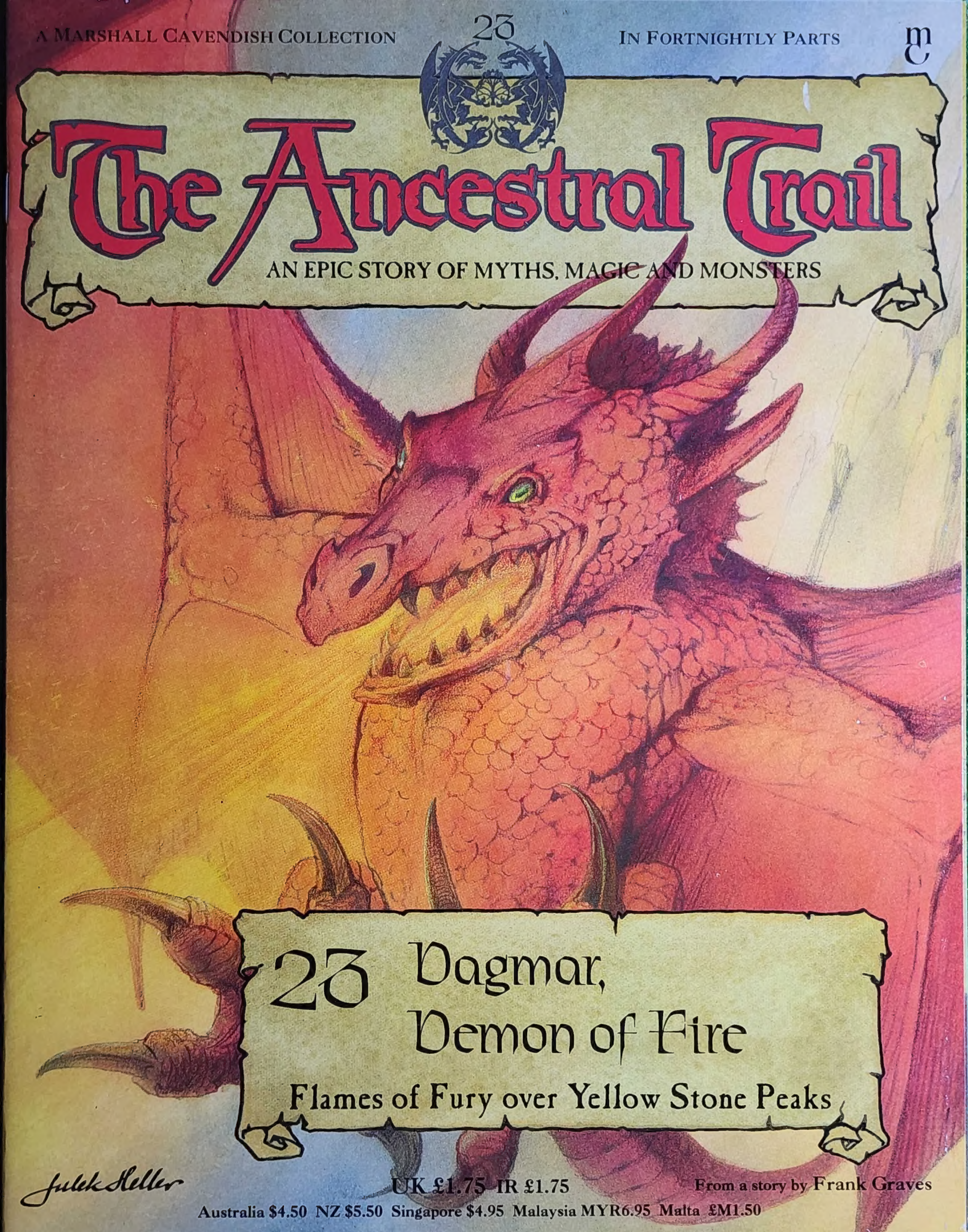
A MARSHALL CAVENDISH COLLECTION 23 IN FORTNIGHTLY PARTS

The Ancestral Trail

AN EPIC STORY OF MYTHS, MAGIC AND MONSTERS



23 Dagmar, Demon of Fire

Flames of Fury over Yellow Stone Peaks

Julek Heller

UK £1.75 IR £1.75

Australia $4.50 NZ $5.50 Singapore $4.95 Malaysia MYR6.95 Malta £M1.50

From a story by Frank Graves

On the Twenty-Third Day . . .

Beware the fire from demon sprung
By the bridge so weakly slung.
From the danger bravely run
The fight has only just begun.
Remember well what legends say.
There is a green hill far away.
The path you seek as hard you may,
But evil 'tis that rules the day.

Richard, Melek and Orkan spun helplessly upwards on the current of hot air. Richard saw earth flashing past on either side, then he was out in the open. The hot jet died and the trio thudded down on the ground.

A short distance away from them lay a wide expanse of freshly turned soil. They had been blown out of the pyramid even as it disappeared underground.

Across the abyss

"Let's have a look at the next riddle," Richard said after they had caught their breath. They read from the *Book of Prophecies*, then trudged off towards a range of stony yellow mountains.

Before long, the three arrived at a deep chasm spanned by a rope bridge, whose thick cords supported a series of wooden slats. The slats looked sound enough, although some were cracked.

It was the only way across, so the trio would have to chance it. Orkan took a few cautious steps forward.

"I think it will be okay," he said as the bridge bounced slightly under his weight.

Richard and Melek stepped on to the bridge. Looking down, they saw a white torrent swirling and foaming over black rocks far below. The bridge swayed gently as the three made their way across, then, halfway over, the worst happened.

Bridge to nowhere

The ropes holding the wooden slats in place seemed to turn to dust and the boards began falling into the void below. Then, with a loud report, the ropes holding the bridge behind them broke loose from the cliff and swung slowly down into the chasm.

"Grab hold of this rope!" Richard shouted.

The three grabbed the rope as it swung down and across the abyss. As the cliff face slammed up to meet them, the other rope broke free and slithered down the cliff like an enormous snake. Luck was still on their side.

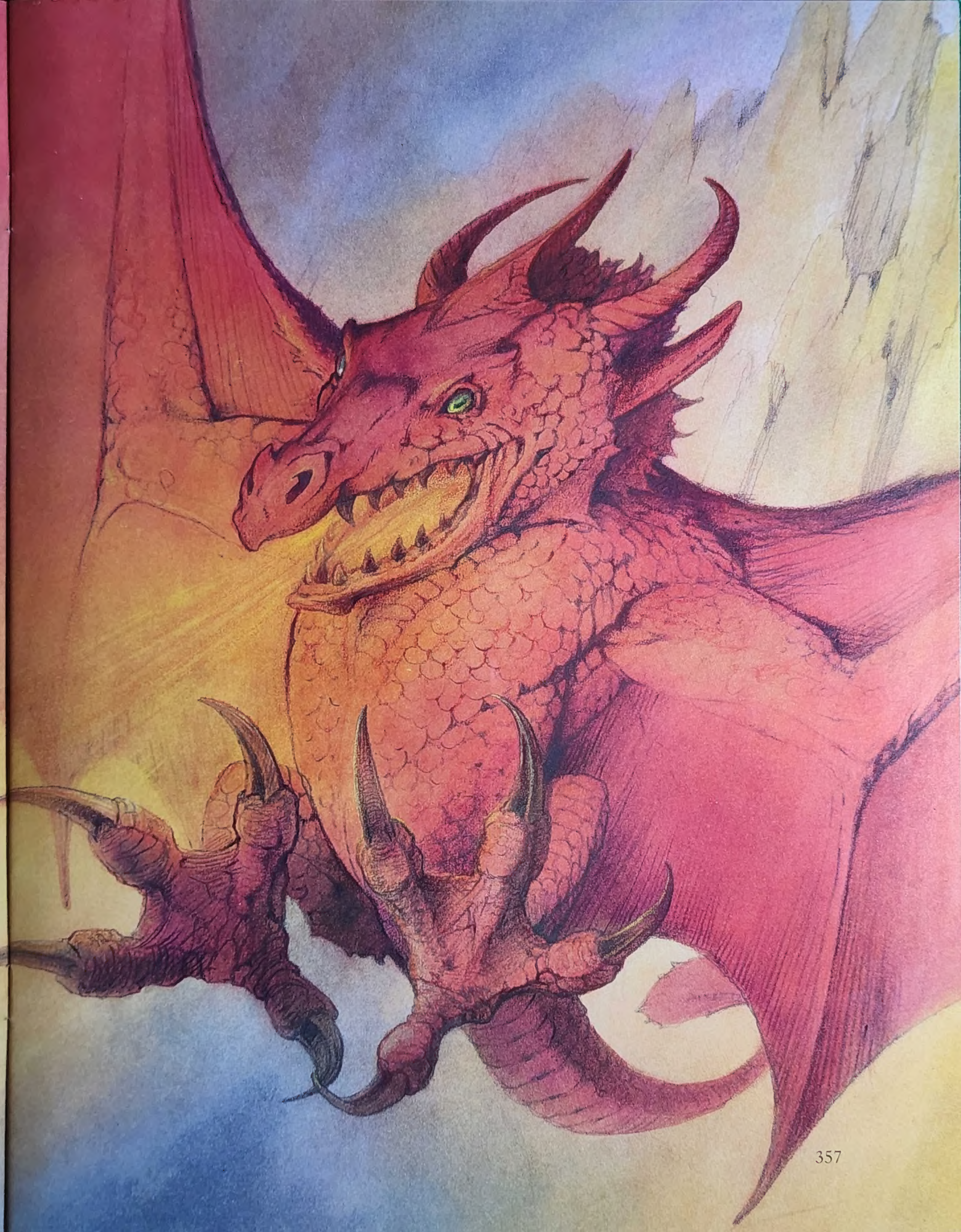
The three clung like limpets to the dangling rope. Its massive girth had shielded them from the full force of the collision, but they still felt the shock waves.

Slowly and painfully they pulled themselves up the rope. At any second, they expected it to come loose and hurl them to the ground, but soon the edge of the cliff was within Richard's reach. He stretched up his arm but before he could haul himself over, a stream of fire shot out of the sky and splattered against the rockface.

Demon of fire

Richard craned his neck and saw a jagged shape flash through the gorge. As the speeding red blur swooped up into a steep turn, he got a closer look at the creature. Its body was covered in red scales and backward-sloping horns jutted out of its head. A constant gust of flames shot out from its sharp-toothed snout .

The creature levelled out and screamed past them. A second jet of flame seared into the cliff



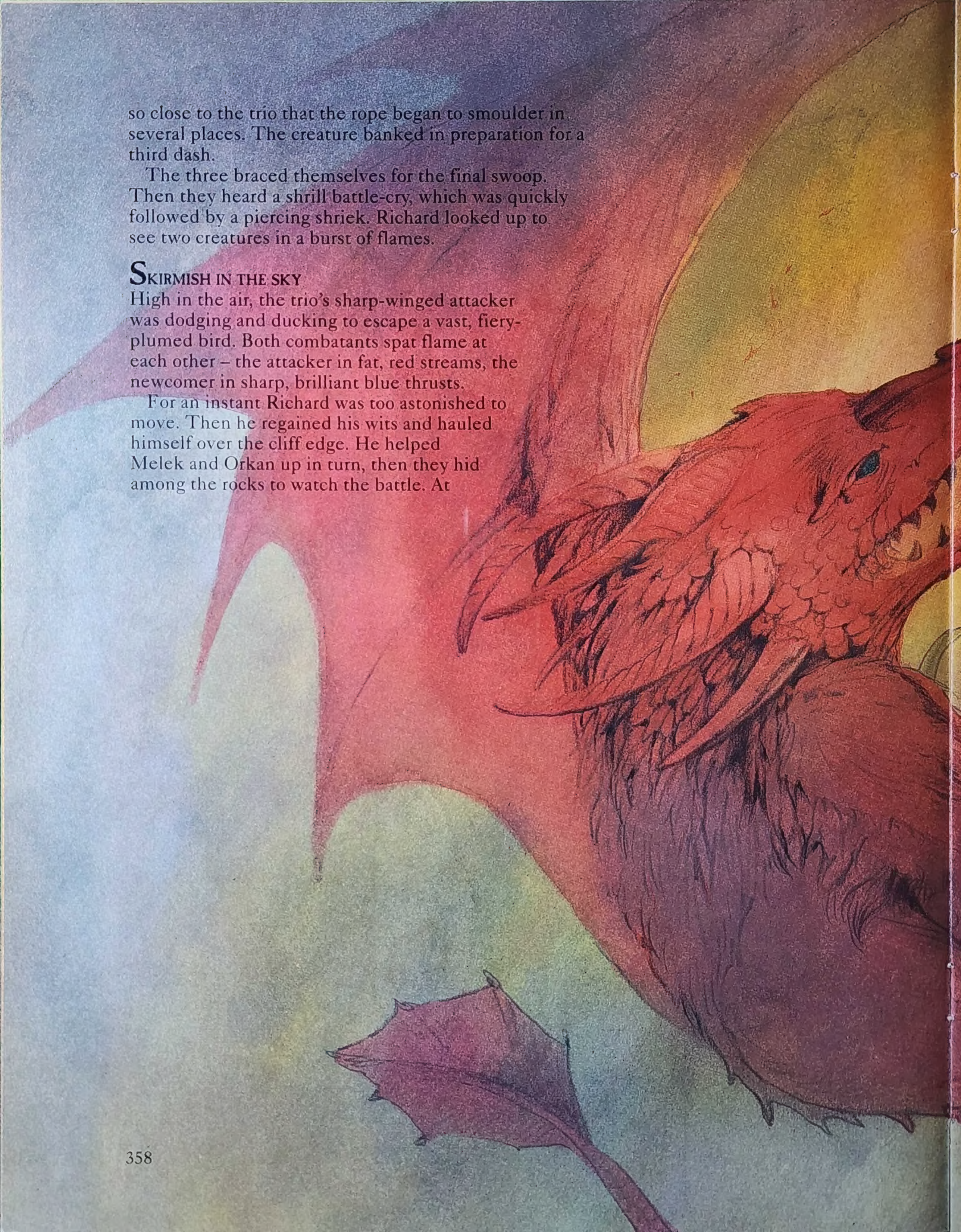
so close to the trio that the rope began to smoulder in several places. The creature banked in preparation for a third dash.

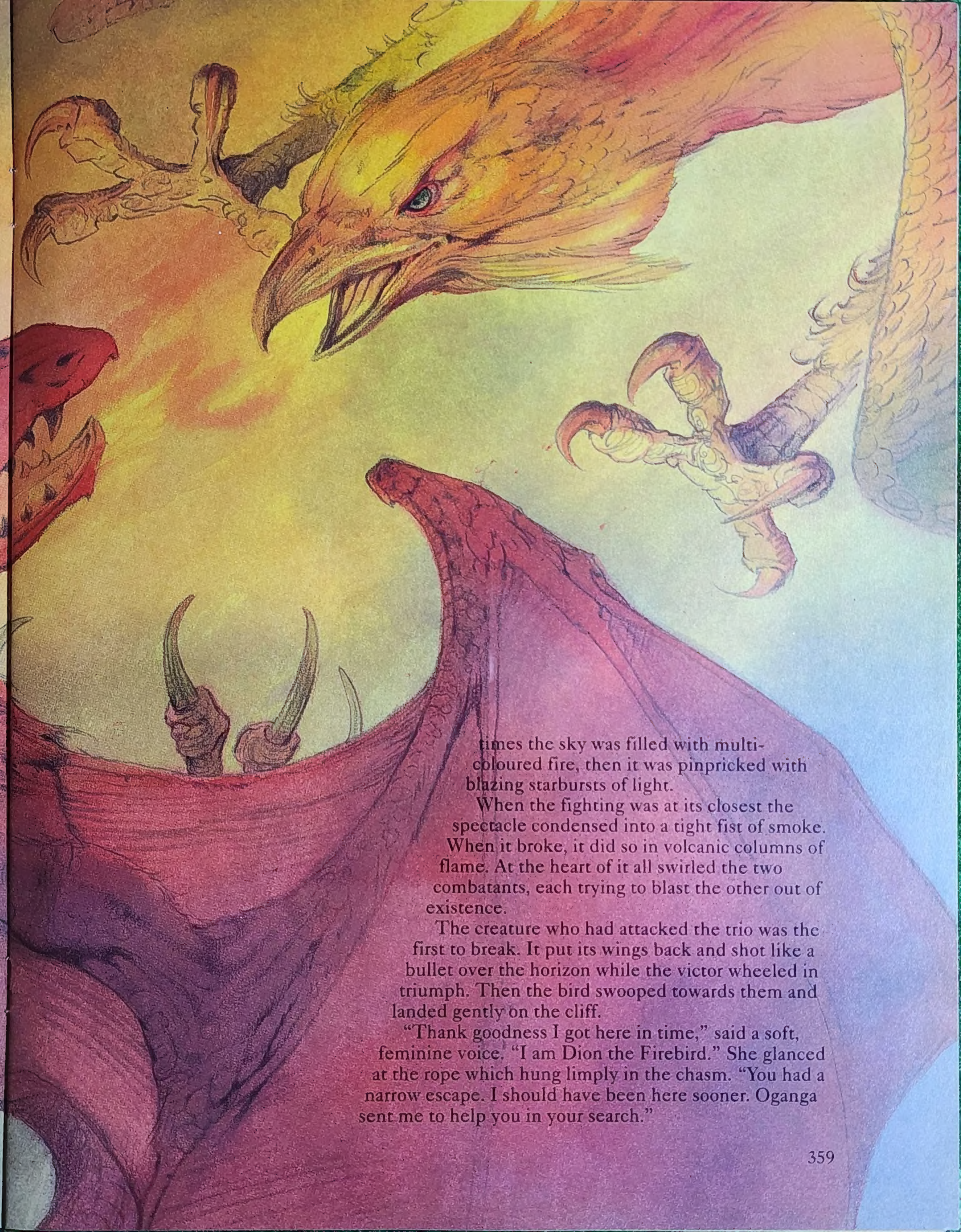
The three braced themselves for the final swoop. Then they heard a shrill battle-cry, which was quickly followed by a piercing shriek. Richard looked up to see two creatures in a burst of flames.

Skirmish in the sky

High in the air, the trio's sharp-winged attacker was dodging and ducking to escape a vast, fiery-plumed bird. Both combatants spat flame at each other – the attacker in fat, red streams, the newcomer in sharp, brilliant blue thrusts.

For an instant Richard was too astonished to move. Then he regained his wits and hauled himself over the cliff edge. He helped Melek and Orkan up in turn, then they hid among the rocks to watch the battle. At





times the sky was filled with multi-coloured fire, then it was pinpricked with blazing starbursts of light.

When the fighting was at its closest the spectacle condensed into a tight fist of smoke. When it broke, it did so in volcanic columns of flame. At the heart of it all swirled the two combatants, each trying to blast the other out of existence.

The creature who had attacked the trio was the first to break. It put its wings back and shot like a bullet over the horizon while the victor wheeled in triumph. Then the bird swooped towards them and landed gently on the cliff.

"Thank goodness I got here in time," said a soft, feminine voice. "I am Dion the Firebird." She glanced at the rope which hung limply in the chasm. "You had a narrow escape. I should have been here sooner. Oganga sent me to help you in your search."

"What was that thing that attacked us?" Richard asked, relieved to hear that Oganga had survived his battle with Boltor.

"Dagmar, the Evil One's demon of fire," she replied. "He's powerful and vicious. We must move on as soon as we can."

Gathering forces

"Do you have any news of Golan?" Richard asked eagerly.

"Many of our forces have joined him outside the Ancestral City and more are on their way," Dion said. "Juroot managed to overcome Zock, the cannibal chief, and after that his dwarf forces came back to our side. What about you? Everything rests on your success."

"There's just one more pod to find," Richard said with pride.

"Good, I can help you with that," Dion said. "There is a pod at Wizard's Well, but to get

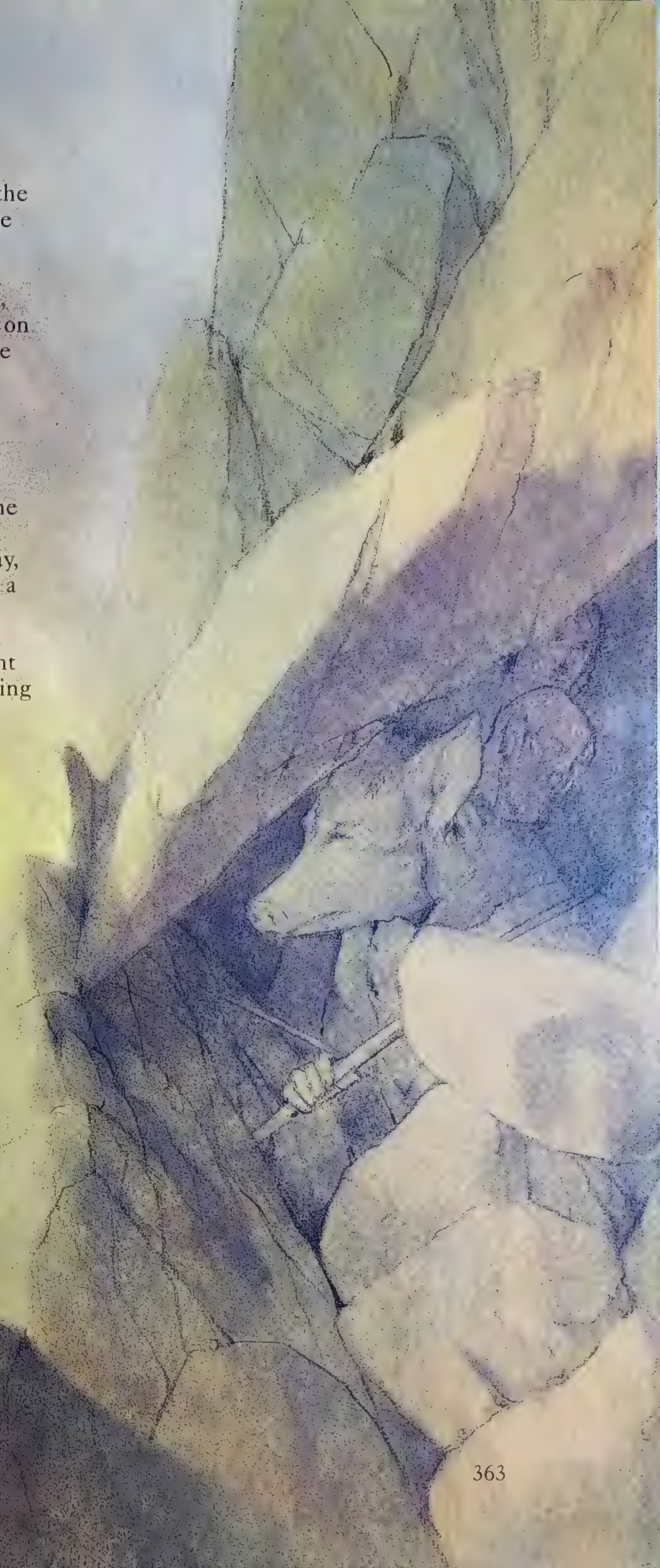
there you must find a way through Sorcerer's Falls . . ."

Before Dion could finish, they heard the fierce beating of wings approaching. The four looked up just in time to dodge the jet of flame which shot from Dagmar's beak. When they next lifted their heads, the Evil One's fire demon was hunched on a nearby crag, watching their every move with malevolent purpose.

Deadly diversion

Dagmar began to cackle with hideous laughter, picking up boulders as if they were mere toys and hurling them into the chasm below. He uncovered the lair of a small mountain creature. It scuttled away, a round ball of stripy fur that resembled a cross between a rabbit and a badger.

Dagmar sneered, then struck out with one of his taloned claws. Richard thought that the creature had escaped with nothing more than a graze. He soon learned that Dagmar's talons were full of poison and was horrified to see the little creature shriek in pain and fall to the ground, writhing in agony.



Richard and Orkan drew their weapons as Dagmar directed a torrent of liquid fire at them. Orkan strung his bow and started firing a steady stream of arrows at Dagmar. Although every missile struck its target, Orkan was surprised to see that the fire demon remained unhurt. His only response was to splash yet more jets of flame in their direction.

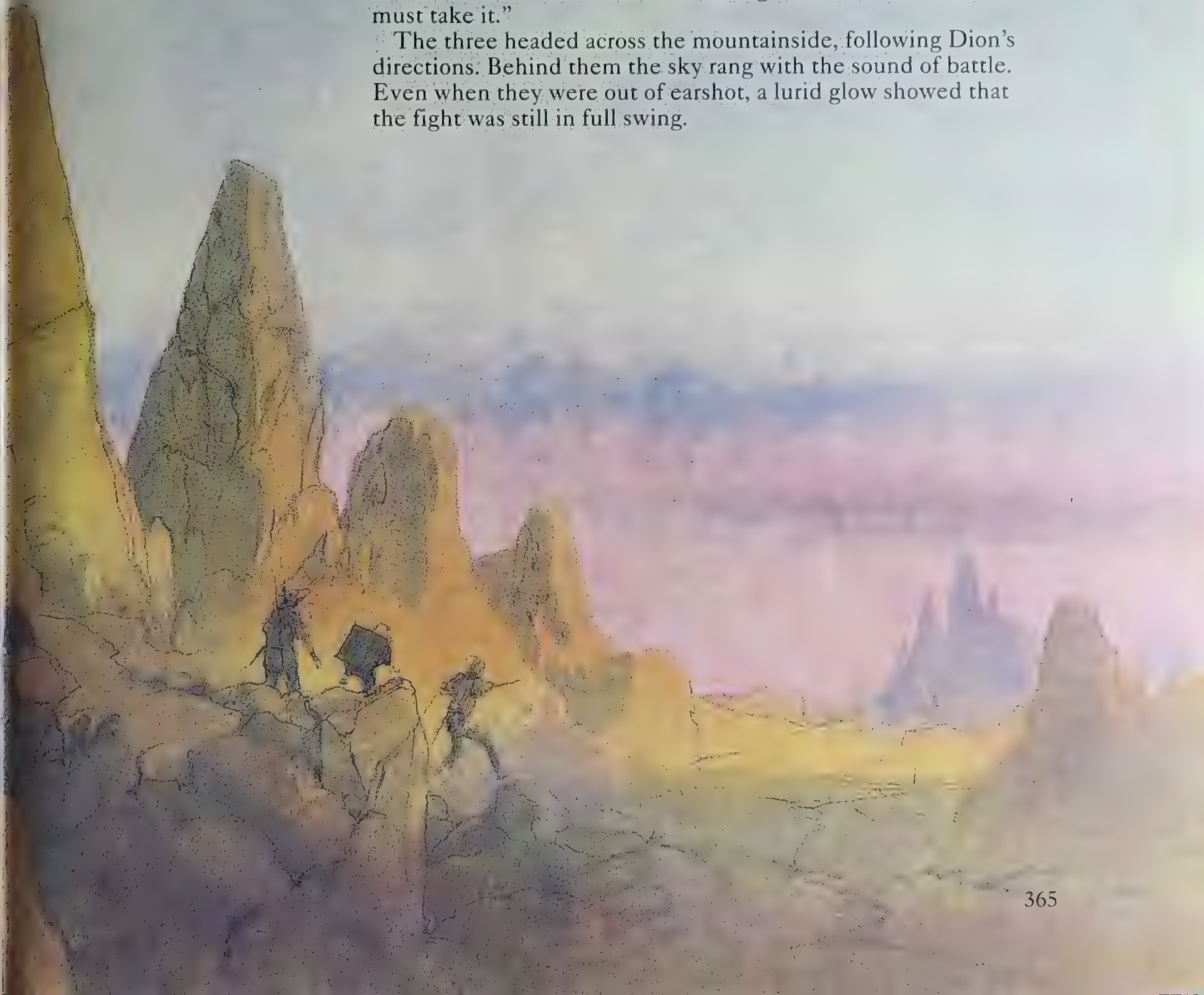
Fight to the death

"Your arrows are useless against Dagmar," Dion said. "The battle must be between him and me – you must all leave now, and finish your quest."

Dion hurriedly gave Richard rough directions to Sorcerer's Falls and warned him to take care. Then she rose like a fireball into the sky. Dagmar saw her immediately and bellowed his fury in a flash of flame. Once again the heavens exploded as the two enemies locked in mortal combat.

"Come on!" Richard said. "Dion's given us our chance. We must take it."

The three headed across the mountainside, following Dion's directions. Behind them the sky rang with the sound of battle. Even when they were out of earshot, a lurid glow showed that the fight was still in full swing.



At first the companions were able to follow the path that led across the slope from the bridge. After a while the path petered out, leaving the trio to cross fields of yellow stone.

They fell into a steady marching rhythm and soon they were standing within sight of a craggy outcrop. At its centre rose a flat-topped cone. Far off, they could hear the thunder of falling water.

Richard felt he had an intimate knowledge of the land ahead. "That's Sorcerer's Falls!" he said.

In their excitement the trio failed to notice that they were no longer alone. It was Orkan who first heard the heavy beat of wings and looked up to see a dark shape coming at them from out of the sun.

"Run!" he shouted. "Dagmar's back."

Their pursuer had already thudded down on the ground, enveloping them with an acrid stench of burning.

It was not Dagmar, as Orkan had supposed. It was Dion – a Dion quite unlike the flamboyant creature who had saved them by the bridge.

Blood-stained victor

Her brilliant feathers were scorched. In places they had burned off altogether, leaving patches of red, weeping skin. Her face was a dishevelled mask, out of which peered two bloodshot eyes.

"Are you all right?" Richard asked in dismay.

"I'll be okay," Dion replied with a wry smile. "Dagmar's dead, but he almost finished me off too. I won't be able to help you now. I'll rest here for a while then get back to the Ancestral City to get my wounds taken care of."

"Don't worry," Richard said. "We can hear Sorcerer's Falls from here."

"Be on your guard," Dion warned, "and good luck to you."

The three bade farewell to the stricken firebird and walked towards the sound of running water. They opted for walking the relatively flat glen that encompassed the outcrop. If, as Richard thought, there was a river running off the crag, they would meet it in the glen and follow it up to its source – Sorcerer's Falls.

The river, when it came, ran deep and raucous out of the mountain, spewing from the rocky slice that it had carved over

centuries into the stony soil. The trio followed its course uphill until, round a corner, they found themselves face to face with Sorcerer's Falls.

From high above their heads, water sluiced down in a torrential downpour to shatter against a jumbled pile of rocks at the waterfall's base. The spray-filled air was ribboned with shifting rainbows and the noise was deafening.

Curtain of water

The three could see no way of getting through the waterfall. They stared up the wet, white precipice with sinking hearts.

Richard gazed at the Fall's upper lip, where the river tumbled into thin air. Specks of water spattered into his face. He was overcome by a sense of utter despair. He concentrated hard, trying to pick up any message that Golan might be sending him. There was nothing. The prophecy was right. Evil ruled the day.

Shoomi's Sanctuary

Come into this ancient domain and use your powers of observation to find . . .

Shoomi and Shoobi

Look out for these friendly little creatures again. They are still on the trail and hiding somewhere in the illustrations in this issue.

In issue 22, Shoomi and Shoobi could be found on the inside front cover.

Puzzle Map

Cut out the map piece. Work out where it fits and glue in position on the Ancestral World puzzle map.

Power of Evil

Cut out the letter block and keep it safe. A clue will be given in issue 26 that will help you form the letters into a phrase that reveals the source of the Evil One's power.

NB The competition will be open to residents of the UK and Eire only.

3-Minute Challenge

Mask of Evil

A fragment of the Evil One's mask is hidden somewhere in the illustrations in this issue. Can you find it in less than three minutes?

In issue 22, the fragment of mask was hidden on page 338.

Seal of Loktar

Did you spot the seal of Loktar?

The seal appeared on Loktar's ring as he began to climb out of his tomb on page 348. It also appeared above the entrance to the pyramid on page 341!

Life Force Pod

As you read about the demon of fire, watch for the clue that will tell you which pod Richard found in the Great Pyramid of Loktar.

Monsters and Magic

When you have enjoyed Dagmar's adventure, read about the Sphinx and the Chimera on Morbane's story cards. Which of these characters do you think Dagmar is based on?

In issue 22, Zyton was based on Geryon.

Check your answers in the next issue.

The Ancestral Trail

Cut out the location recorder and add it to your playing pieces for the role-playing game.

HOW TO CONTINUE YOUR COLLECTION

Most of our customers prefer to collect issues from their newsagent by placing a regular order. To help you collect THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL we are pleased to offer the following services:

DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR £1.75). NB We offer a full subscription service in the UK. Issues are sent to your home POST FREE and will be dispatched to arrive on the day of publication.

SUBSCRIPTION

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR£1.75). NB We require a minimum order of 10 issues for subscription. POSTAGE IS FREE. Please mark your envelope 'THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS.

MISSING ANY ISSUES?

If you have missed any issues in your collection, we can supply them through our Back Numbers Dept. NB Orders are subject to availability.

BACK NUMBERS

Each issue costs £1.75 (IR£1.75) including p&p. Please mark your envelope THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL BACK NUMBERS.

HOW TO PAY

Payment should be made by cheque or postal order (made payable to Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd) to: MARSHALL CAVENDISH, MARLBOROUGH ROAD, ALDBOURNE, MARLBOROUGH, WILTSHIRE SN8 2HP. Telephone 0672 40776.

In the following countries, services are available as in the UK:

AUSTRALIA

Back Numbers Send cover price plus 95¢ p&h per issue to Gordon & Gotch Ltd, PO Box 290, Burwood, Victoria 3125.
Slipcase Send $13.95. Make cheques payable to Gordon & Gotch Ltd.

NEW ZEALAND

Back Numbers Send cover price to Gordon & Gotch (NZ) Ltd, PO Box 584, Auckland.
Slipcase Send $17.95.

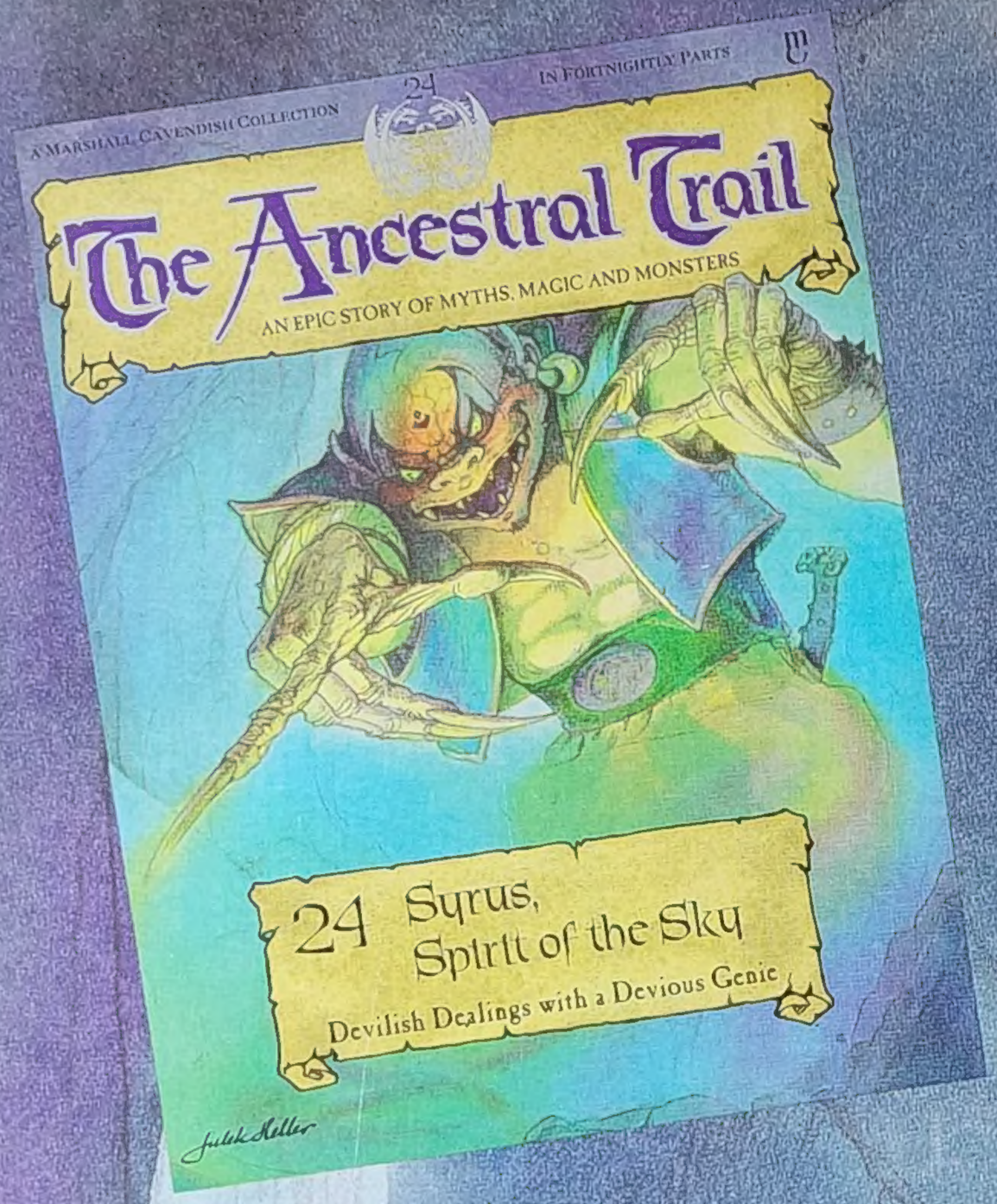
MALTA

Back Numbers and Slipcase Available through your newsagent.

SLIPCASE

You can order the slipcase to preserve your copies of THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL. The slipcase holds 26 issues and costs £5.95 (IR£5.95) including p&p. Please mark your envelope THE ANCESTRAL TRAIL SLIPCASE.

© Marshall Cavendish Ltd & Frank Graves 1993 Published by Marshall Cavendish Partworks Ltd, 119 Wardour Street, London W1V 3TD
Colour by Bright Arts Ltd. Typeset Output by Litho Link Ltd. Printed in Great Britain.


A Marshall Cavendish Collection
24
In Fortnightly Parts
The Ancestral Trail
An Epic Story of Myths, Magic and Monsters
24 Syrus, Spirit of the Sky
Devilish Dealings with a Devious Genie
Julek Heller

In Issue 24

Syrus, Spirit of the Sky

The hapless trio are cut down to size by a monstrous genie. They must find a way to break his evil spell and escape his mountain lair. Time is fast running out for the powers of good.

plus

- Two stories from Morbane warn about the hazards of dabbling in magic.
- More tokens for **The Ancestral Trail** role-playing game.
- Another piece for the Ancestral World puzzle map.

Coming in Issue 25

Fenrar, the Desert Stalker

Richard's search is almost over. The last pod is near at hand but all is not what it seems at the Wizard's Well oasis.

plus

From Morbane – two stories about creatures who can change their shape at will • More pieces for the role-playing game.

ISBN 0-7485-4207-8